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ABSTRACT

This journal issue concerns women's perspectives in several areas of communication. Cynthia J. Huyink, in "A Dramatistic Analysis of 'Sexual Politics' by Kate Millett," examines Millett's motivations and analyzes the rhetorical strategies she used to accomplish her attempt to explicate the system of patriarchy, to reveal its injustices to its victims, and to incite readers to overthrow the sexual power structure. In "Covering Women: Women's Publications and the Mass Media," Sheila J. Gibbons describes a study that examined the relationship between advocates of women's rights who edit periodicals for women and the mass media for whom the women's movement was a news event. Sonja K. Foss, in "Feminism Confronts Catholicism: A Study of the Use of Perspective by Incongruity," examines and evaluates the use of perspective by incongruity in two pieces of feminist rhetoric (one by Ti-Grace Atkinson and one by Mary Daly) against the policies of the Catholic church regarding women. (MKM)

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Contents

A Dramatistic Analysis of Sexual Politics by Kate Millett — Cynthia J. Huyink — 1

Feminist Confronts Catholicism: A Study of the Use of Perspective by Incongruity — Sonja K. Foss — 7

Covering Women: Women's Publications and the Mass Media — Sheila J. Gibbons — 17

* * *

Newsletter — 1

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BULLETIN: WOMEN'S STUDIES IN COMMUNICATION will publish material concerning the impact on human communication of sex, sex role identification, images of women and men, and other related issues. The topic area is not limited by discipline or research method. Materials deriving from interpersonal communication, small group communication, organizational communication, oral interpretation, drama, media, rhetoric, public address, or other perspectives that throw light on communication behavior are appropriate.

In addition, the BULLETIN will publish announcements, book reviews and course related material such as bibliographies, course descriptions, and other instructional materials. It is my hope that the BULLETIN will become a useful and lively forum for discussion of the issues raised by research and teaching about sex in communication.

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A DRAMATISTIC ANALYSIS OF SEXUAL POLITICS BY KATE MILLETT

Kenneth Burke has said, "Power endows individuals with authority. Authority in turn establishes definite relationships among people, reflecting the degree to which they possess power. These relationships can be viewed as a ladder or the hierarchy of society."[1] In Sexual Politics Kate Millett defines and analyzes the power structure which she believes is of paramount importance, the "ancient and universal scheme that prevails in the area of sex."[2] She believes that sexual identity automatically endows a man with authority, but renders a woman powerless because of the prevalence of the system of patriarchy.

In her dissertation Millett argues further that sexual politics provides a mandate for all other forms of oppression: "Thus all the mechanisms of human inequality arose out of the foundations of male supremacy and the subjugation of women, sexual politics serving historically as the foundation of all other social, political, and economic structures." (p. 168). She even suggests that sexual politicking is ultimately responsible for most of what is wrong with mankind: "All the selfish propensities, the self-worship, the unjust self-preference, which exist among mankind, have their source and root in, and derive their principal nourishment from, the present constitution of the relation of men and women." (p. 146). Consequently, she seeks to destroy this system.

Sexual Politics attempts to explicate the system of patriarchy, to reveal its injustices to its victims, and to incite readers to overthrow the sexual power structure. This paper will examine Millett's motivations and analyze the rhetorical strategies she uses to accomplish her purpose. I will show how Millett's personal experiences with the patriarchal system caused her to undergo an ideological conversion and how Sexual Politics is an attempt to induce its readers to experience a similar conversion. A dramatistic analysis will be used to discover and describe Millett's motivations and to explicate her rhetorical strategies. Burke's terms "identification," "division," "acceptance," "rejection," "guilt," "victimate," "purification," and "redemption" are the tools used for this analysis; and the terms "scene" and "agent" from his pentad (act, scene, agent, agency, and purpose) will be used to discuss Millett's assessment of responsibility for the perpetuation of the patriarchal system.

Let us begin by examining the personal conversion which ultimately motivated the author to write Sexual Politics. Kate Millett had never been successful at fulfilling the traditional role of womanhood. "All my life guys said I was neurotic. I didn't accept my femininity, they said."[3] Her values were in conflict with those generally accepted by society. For example, she believed that all members of a society should have the right to work at a worthwhile job, that productivity is essential to happiness, and that economic independence is a prerequisite to human freedom and dignity (p. 64). She also desired complete freedom of sexual expression for all people. However, society had restrictions against these desired goals, especially for women. Millett's attempts to resolve these conflicts brought her to the Women's Liberation Movement and she began to perceive the existence of a

power hierarchy based on sex.[5] She could not accept the values operating in this structure, so she violently rejected the whole hierarchal system.

Kenneth Burke proposes that, "Whenever man rejects the traditional hierarchy, he 'falls,' and thereby acquires a feeling of guilt."[6] Millett's rejection of the existing hierarchy did indeed result in feelings of alienation, disorder, and guilt. She states, "As the whole subject of sex is covered with shame, ridicule, and silence, any failure to conform to stereotype reduced the individual...to an abysmal feeling of guilt, unworthiness, and confusion." (p. 311). Though Millett had discovered the existence of a power hierarchy based on sex and had begun to understand the ramifications of this system in explaining her own experiences, her feelings of alienation, frustration, and confusion remained; a mere understanding of cause did not eliminate the guilt resulting from her variance with society's accepted order.

According to Burke's dramatistic approach, to relieve guilt an individual must undergo an act of purification. This can be accomplished either through mortification, an act of self-sacrifice, or through victimage, which is the purging of guilt through a scapegoat that symbolizes society's guilt. For redemption to occur, the act of purification must be equivalent to the degree of guilt.[7] As we shall see later, Millett does identify a scapegoat upon whom to place guilt. However, she concludes that complete redemption will be possible only when the whole oppressed class is set free and the entire sexual hierarchy is abolished.

Sexual Politics is an attempt to effect the destruction of the patriarchal system rhetorically. To facilitate this goal, Millett tries to give her readers a conversion experience similar to the one she herself went through. This conversion process involves recognizing and rejecting the sexual power hierarchy, purging the resultant anger and guilt on a scapegoat, and finally, actively pursuing the destruction of the system. To accomplish her purpose, Millett employs two very effective and complimentary strategies, identification and division. Throughout the book she distinctly defines three groups or categories of people; readers are encouraged to identify with two of the groups and divide themselves from the third.

The first group Millett encourages her readers to identify with is women as members of an oppressed class. She gives her readers a wholistic view of the patriarchal hierarchy and encourages them to recognize the injustices they have suffered under this system. She also points out that, until now, they have been unwitting victims. She explains that women's oppressed mentality has previously inhibited their ability to successfully identify with one another: "What little literature the social sciences afford us in this context confirms the presence in women of the expected traits of minority status: group self-hatred and self-rejection, a contempt for both herself and her fellows--the result of that continual, however subtle, reiteration of her inferiority which she eventually accepts as fact." (p. 85). Thus Millett attempts to show female readers their common plight and to effect their unification based on their shared victimage. The author chronicles the ills perpetrated under the system, and, outraged, the reader rejects patriarchy as Millett had. The reader, like Millett, consequently experiences feelings of anger, frustration, alienation, and guilt at having rejected the established order.

The author then offers her readers hope through identification with another,

more enlightened group consisting of those people who, like Millett and now her readers, recognize and reject the patriarchal system and actively work against it. This group includes the feminists of the early stages of the Women's Movement (e.g. Susan B. Anthony and Sojourner Truth) and men who defy the system (e.g. Mill, Engels, and Genet). Millett treats the members of this group with love, compassion, and great admiration; they are praised for their vision and insight and lauded for the courage they displayed when they rebelled against the system. Genet, for example, is applauded for being "a great romantic," yet possessing a "formidable analytic mind," "political wisdom," and a "brutal frankness," His prose is said to constitute a "painstaking exegesis" and a "disinterested scrutiny." He "perceives," "submits," "demonstrates," and "concludes," thus bringing to light the "truths he had learned." In short, "He appears to be the only living male writer of first-class literary gifts to have transcended the sexual myths of our era." (pp. 37-41). Few readers would hesitate to identify with a group whose members exhibit such admirable qualities.

Millett then delineates a third category, a group which she, in contrast to the other groups, finds anathema; who encourages her readers to divide themselves as far as possible from these miscreants. This group of arch-villains consists of the men who dedicate themselves to the justification, maintenance, and perpetuation of the system of patriarchy. It includes such notables as Ruskin, Freud, Lawrence, Miller, and Mailer. The terms used to characterize Mailer illustrate how Millett's descriptions attempt to avert any kind of identification with members of this group. Mailer is characterized by "delusion," "cannabalistic logic," "manic ernestness," and even "handwringing." He "indulges himself unstintingly," "argues from the ardors of the sheets," and is "remarkably smug." Millett summarizes: Mailer's "...critical and political prose is based on a set of values so blatently and comically chauvinist as to constitute a new aesthetic." (pp. 429-32). The use of terms like "chauvinist" simultaneously encourages division from Mailer and his cohorts and reinforces identification with enlightened activists.

Millett frequently attributes the views of her arch-villains to men in general, thus motivating readers to divide themselves from all males. For example, she says, "Miller has given voice to certain sentiments which masculine culture has long experienced but always rather carefully suppressed: the yearning to effect a complete depersonalization of women into cunt, a game sexuality of cheap exploitation, a childish fantasy of power untroubled by the reality of persons or the complexity of fellow human beings,.." (p. 411, emphasis mine). This kind of treatment identifies both the arch-villains Millett has singled out for scrutiny and men collectively as a common enemy. As we shall see, this tactic is useful, but also problematic.

Identifying men, especially several famous and blatently offensive men, as the enemy fulfills several important rhetorical functions. Millett has worked her readers into an emotional fever by convincing them that they have been exploited ninnies. The intense anger and frustration they feel cannot be sufficiently vented on an abstract theory, nor can women be effectively unified for a common cause unless a concrete enemy is pinpointed, so Millett has personified the ideology. Also, when Millett's readers reject the existing hierarchy, they are saddled with guilt, as the author had been. To provide her readers with relief from that guilt, Millett transforms the enemy into a scapegoat. Millett's and her readers' personal guilt and society's collective guilt are subsequently transferred to an azazel and those who reject patriarchy can be purified.

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The lines used to define the three categories for identification and division, while providing a useful vehicle for arousing awareness, venting anger, and relieving guilt, cannot be permanent boundaries, however, as this would ultimately prevent the achievement of Millett's explicitly stated goal. Ironically, the desired end is an elimination of all categories and stereotypes dependent on sex roles. Let us use Burke's terms "scene" and "agent" to further discuss the ramifications of this dilemma and how Millett resolves it.

Throughout Sexual Politics there is vacillation about who the real enemy is. At times especially in early sections of the book, Millett seems to exhibit a philosophy emphasizing the "scene," or the setting or context within which the problem occurs; society in general appears to be responsible for the perpetuation of the unjust system of patriarchy. "Sexual politics obtains consent through the 'socialization' of both sexes to basic patriarchal politics with regard to temperament, role, and status." (p. 46). The symptoms, the end results of patriarchy, become the means by which the system is perpetrated. A male-dominant society is the norm, and both males and females are pictures as helpless victims of this society. Millett reveals such a moement of sympathy when she states, "Young boys whose virtually only permitted self is their maleness are continuously harassed by the danger or the accusation of losing their 'masculinity.' And the same psycho-social coercion is applied to girls as well." (p. 311). But this materialistic view neither relieves anger and guilt nor provides a solution to the problem, so it surfaces infrequently and then only briefly as Millett constructs her arguments.

The treatment Millett gives Ruskin, Swinburne, Lawrence, Miller, Mailer, and many others shifts causality from "scene" to "agent," in this case the group of arch-villains previously mentioned, and by association, men in general. She dramatically portrays them as vicious miscreants who are deliberately plotting to extend the present sexual hierarchy and fortify it against any forthcoming opposition. This view of men as a common enemy, as the "agents" who are primarily responsible for perpetrating the system which keeps them in power, dominates much of the book. But his perspective offers no solution either, as women remain helpless victims and men have no apparent motivation to disturb the status quo.

Neither of these views, then, provide a real and permanent solution to the problem of sexual oppression. An abstract societal hierarchy which perpetuates itself may or may not be an accurate description of reality; either way, it is difficult to combat an abstract, generalized form. Furthermore, this view elicits feelings of helplessness and hopelessness by sustaining the victimage theme. Nor is a viable solution apparent with a view that depicts men as responsible "agents." If men continue to be depicted as scapegoats and enemies, lines of division will remain indefinitely and categories based on sex can never be eliminated. To make matters worse, if men feel that the only alternative to the present system is a reverse hierarchy, which well they might if men and women remain in enemy camps, they will probably struggle mightily to maintain the present structure.

Millett's vacillation in assigning blame illustrates an ambivalence that pervades the whole Women's Liberation Movement from an organizational to the individual level. Organizations such as the National Organization of Women favor the social conditioning theory, while radical feminist groups prefer to do battle openly with men, their common enemy. Individually many females experience a recurring internal struggle, alternately angrily blaming men for their plight and viewing them as co-

victims of debilitating societal demands.

The Women's Movement and other revolutionary groups would do well to analyze this ambivalence and its causes, and to reevaluate their rhetorical strategies, considering expecially the long-range results of a concentration on identifying and categorizing an enemy. While this strategy is useful for venting anger, relieving guilt, and generating an emotionally-charged committment to a cause, the lines of division may become indelibly etched in the minds of the rhetor's audience and hinder the achievement of a lasting solution to a problem. Because this strategy also implies that the enemy is the effective "agent," the rhetorician's final tactic must be to shift responsibility to an agent who is potentially powerful enough and who can be sufficiently motivated to effect the desired change. Millett employs this final step almost as an afterthought in Sexual Politics, but she does realize its importance.

In her final analysis, Millett shifts the burden of responsibility for change to agents who have the potential to effect change and by now should be sufficiently motivated to do so, members of the oppressed but enlightened class. Women ultimately become the agents in whose hands the future lies. Millett finally proclaims that patriarchy exists because women allow it to exist.

Prior to Millett's revelation of the system of patriarchy women were understandably totally unaware that they had the option to reject their predefined sex roles, to question the validity of society's expectations. But Sexual Politics offers the female reader a choice: she can continue to accept her role in the patriarchal system, or she can refuse to participate in this hideous system of oppression. If she does not join the revolution, she must now accept her rightful share of responsibility and guilt for perpetrating an unjust and destructive hierarchy, as she is convicted by her new knowledge and understanding. Ignorance is no longer an excuse for inaction. She is encouraged to shed her slave mentality and rebel against the system without doubt, fear, or guilt, because patriarchy is wrong. An act of will on the part of the reader can solve the problem; human "agents" can affect their social environment. Not until the postscript does Millett clearly reveal her idealistic philosophy, but then she capsulizes her hopes: "It is ... possible that now represent a very crucial element capable of swinging the national mood, poised at this moment between the alternatives of progress or political repression, toward meaningful change." (p. 474).

Millett gives the reader an ideal, a meaningful alternative, toward which to move. The ideal society would be totally free from power hierarchies of any kind. All sexual and social categories, ranks, and stereotypes would be eliminated (p. 474). Instead, all human relationships would be based on mutual respect, and every member of society would be allowed to maintain his or her inherent human dignity. All people would be of equal worth and human life would be valued above everything else. Millett feels that under a system of complete egalitarianism, humankind could realize its full potential for humanistic achievement.

In conclusion, Sexual Politics is an attempt to cause the reader to undergo the same process of conversion Millett herself experienced. The author encourages her reader to recall any frustrations she may have had, any conflicts she has experienced in her attempt to fulfill the role imposed on her because of her sex.

Then she discovers the theory which explains that these frustrations result from her inferior position in the sexual power hierarchy. She experiences first confusion, then guilt and anger, feelings which Millett encourages her to direct at a scapegoat. Finally, she realizes, as Millett did, that she does have the option to reject the system, that a better society is possible, and that she can help make this ideal a reality. If she accepts the challenge to actively seek to overthrow the sexual power hierarchy, her conversion has been accomplished.

Footnotes

[1]Kenneth Burke, Permanence and Change (Los Altos, Calif.: Hermes, 1954), p. 276.

[2]Kate Millett, Sexual Politics (New York: Avon, 1970), p. 44.

[3]"Who's Come a Long Way, Baby?" Time, Aug. 31, 1970, p. 17.

[4]Bernard L. Brock, "Rhetorical Criticism: A Burkian Approach," Robert L. Scott and Bernard L. Brock, Methods of Rhetorical Criticism: A Twentieth Century Perspective (New York: Harper & Row, 1972), p. 317.

[5]Current Biography Yearbook (New York: N. W. Wilson, 1971), p. 272.

[6]Brock, p. 317.

[7]Brock, p. 318.

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"Who's Come a Long Way, Baby?" Time. August 31, 1970.

Sonja K. Foss

FEMINISM CONFRONT CATHOLICISM: A STUDY OF THE USE OF PERSPECTIVE BY INCONGRUITY

One of Burke's central notions of criticism involves the examination of strategies used in communication for dealing with various situations. When situations are typical and recurrent, people develop names for and strategies of handling them. But when people confront new situations, or what they perceive to be inaccurate views of situations, often there are no names for these situations and thus no traditional ways of dealing with them. In such instances, a new vocabulary arises to name the situation, enabling a person to gain the control over it that the assignment of a name brings.[1]

Perspective by incongruity[2] is one strategy by which people interpret and name new or troubling situations. This technique involves merging categories once believed to be mutually exclusive or wrenching a word loose from one category and applying it to a different category. "Arabian Puritanism" is an example of perspective by incongruity since it combines two words or ideas that usually are not associated with one another. Perspective by incongruity, then, is a strategy that can be used to name accurately a situation that is perceived as inaccurate. It functions to introduce change into the environment and to enable the communicator to control the situation which he or she faces.

The rhetorical critic seeking to understand the strategies that communicators use when they are faced with the problem of resolving two very different perspectives on a particular issue may find part of the answer in the study of perspective by incongruity. The controversy between feminism and Catholocism represents a situation in which communicators must overcome prevailing attitudes that oppose their own perceptions of a situation if they are to be persuasive. Particularly in their views of and treatment of women, these two ideologies differ greatly. If perspective by incongruity is indeed a strategy that communicators use in these kinds of situations, its use likely will appear in feminist rhetoric against the Catholic Church.

This study represents an examination and evaluation of the use of perspective by incongruity in two pieces of feminist rhetoric against the policies of the Church regarding women: (1) a speech presented by Ti-Grace Atkinson at Catholic University in Washington, D. C. on March 10, 1971[3] and (2) an essay by Mary Daly entitled, "Women and the Catholic Church."[4]

I

Ti-Grace Atkinson was a founding member of the New York chapter of the National Organization for Women (NOW) and served on the national board of directors of the organization until her resignation in October, 1968. She resigned because she objected to the hierarchical structure of NOW and wanted it replaced with a system in which officers were rotated monthly. She and other dissatisfied NOW members formed a radical feminist group, The Feminists, based in New York City. She resigned from this group in 1970 following a dispute with other members

about her portrayal as the group's leader by the media. She since has formed another feminist group, Autonomous Women.[5]

Atkinson's speech at Catholic University was billed as an exposé of the Catholic Church's treatment of and attitudes toward women. Atkinson had been banned from speaking at the University by its president, Clarence C. Walton, whose decision initiated a controversy over the issue of free speech and the school's right to rule on what campus speakers say about Church doctrine. The undergraduate and graduate student governments at Catholic University took the issue to court, and U. S. District Court Judge John Lewis Smith, Jr. ruled that Atkinson constitutionally was guaranteed access to the speaking platform at the University.

Two events combined to create an explosive speaking situation for Atkinson: her reputation as a radical feminist and the fact that her audience was familiar with statements she had made earlier at Notre Dame University questioning the virginity of Jesus' mother, Mary. Approximately 1500 people attended benediction at the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception to protest Atkinson's speech, and leaflets denouncing her appeared all over the campus. Hostility toward Atkinson particularly was intense during the speech itself. Patricia Buckley Bozell (sister of columnist William Buckley and former New York senator James Buckley and wife of Brent Bozell, editor of the Catholic magazine, Triumph) ran through the audience to the podium and tried to slap Atkinson in the middle of her speech. She hit the microphone instead and then ran outside the auditorium, where she knelt on the sidewalk and said a rosary.[6]

An examination of the text of Atkinson's speech reveals that perspective by incongruity is her main strategy for meeting the rhetorical situation with which she was faced. In order for audience members to accept her argumentation, they first had to reach the point of questioning the purposes and actions of the Church. Atkinson accomplishes this through the use of strong imagery involving perspective by incongruity. One of the first examples of her use of this technique comes when she compares the Church to the Ku Klux Klan. She juxtaposes these two institutions through links of similar ideologies and costumes: "The Church (hierarchy) is a sort of Ku Klux Klan. Unfortunately, up until tonight, the Church has not been exposed sufficiently to hide its face. And those costumes they wear can hardly be compared monetarily to sheets."[7] Here Atkinson forces her audience to consider the Church in the negative vein in which many people view the Ku Klux Klan and hints at possible reasons for secrecy in the Church.

Perspective by incongruity is evident again when Atkinson refers to the Catholic articles of faith as "Catholic hallucinations."[8] She returns to this image later in the speech when she discusses the oppressive treatment of women by the Church and women's efforts to gain relief from it: "But the cathedrals are inhabited, in addition, by the living dead--the women who pray for relief, whether death or the living death of fantasy. Hallucinations come easily and are welcomed under such conditions."[9] These instances in which hallucinations are paired with articles of faith combine the notion of a mentally disordered perception with the notion of divine, reasonable, and infallible Church doctrine. The intent is to make the audience question the reality and validity of the articles of faith, part of the Church ideology that Atkinson believes oppresses women.

Atkinson uses perspective by incongruity in a discussion of the Catholic Church as a corporation. Although most of the audience undoubtedly realizes that the Church is a business, its commercial aspect is not regarded as its main function. But Atkinson focuses on the Church as a business by juxtaposing the terminology of business and the audience view of the Church as a nonprofit, humanitarian institution: "The Catholic Church is the biggest corporation in the United States. It has a branch in almost every neighborhood. The assets and real estate holdings exceed those of Standard Oil, A. T. & T., and U. S. Steel combined. And the roster of dues-paying members is second only to the rolls of the United States Government."10

Next, Atkinson attempts to destroy the image of the Church as a good, just and charitable institution by labeling it a vulture: "The Church is a kind of vulture on the poor. The Church picks the bones of the poor and is eagerly permitted to do so by them, in exchange for the promise of revenge in the world to come."11 She carries the image further through the use of devil terms, attempting to destroy the connotations of the Church as good: "It is for this, the savage and hypocritical abuse and manipulation of humanity, that the Church and institutional religion are hated and despised by free peoples."12 Here she has done more than describe the Church as an evil element. She has introduced the notion that people cannot be associated with the Church and remain true to the ideals of freedom and justice at the same time. Thus, she has defined the Church as evil and placed it in a separate category from freedom, implying that the two cannot be reconciled.

The evil nature of the Church is reinforced in Atkinson's portrayal of it as a murderer and robber. She pleads for the cause of "women, whom the Church for two thousand years has slaughtered, and robbed, who were born and died deprived of their humanity, who died in agony without even the right to cry out against their pain, because their agony was at the same time their shame."13

At the conclusion of her speech, Atkinson repeatedly uses perspective by incongruity as she charges the Church with various crimes. In these instances, she is associating a supposedly pure Church with the criminal actions of murder, slavery, prostitution, rape, and obscenity:

> I, Ti-Grace Atkinson, in the name of all women, most especially the deceased victims of the accused, charge the Catholic Church, its government, and all its subsidiaries and members such as Catholic University with muder in the first degree, premeditated and willful.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> In the name of all women, I charge the Catholic Church with conspiracy to imprison and enslave the women of the world, through coercion into such institutions as marriage and the family.
>
> In the name of all women, I charge the Catholic Church with forcing many of our class into prostitution, through the financial greed of the Church.
>
> In the name of all women, I charge the Catholic Church with inciting rape against women, by its degrading and sadistic propaganda against women.

> In the name of all women, I charge the Catholic Church with constituting, by its very existence, an obscenity on the face of the earth.[14]

She then pronounces the Catholic Church guilty on all counts,[15] reinforcing the incongruous images of the Church as both just and criminal. Throughout her speech, then, Atkinson combines strong, shocking images to force the audience to question beliefs about the feelings toward the Church.

II

Mary Daly is a professor of theology at Boston College and the author of The Church and the Second Sex (New York: Harper Colophon, 1968) and Beyond God the Father: Toward a Philosophy of Women's Liberation (Boston: Beacon, 1973), in addition to several essays. Her essay in Sisterhood is Powerful dealing with feminism and the Catholic Church represents a more moderate stance than that which Atkinson assumes in her speech. She discusses contradictions between feminist and Catholic ideologies and suggests ways in which the Church can alter its policies so that they will accord with a feminist view of women. Daly's more moderate approach undoubtedly stems from her Catholic background, and this ethical factor alone lends credence to Daly that Atkinson never can have for a Catholic audience. Because of this added credibility and because she is able to envision a reconciliation of feminism and Catholicism, Daly uses perspective by incongruity less and with weaker, less shocking images than does Atkinson.

Daly's first use of perspective by incongruity is her juxtaposition of the Church and injustice. While the Church usually is regarded as just and fair, Daly labels it as unjust: "The existence of the problem of antifeminism in the Church, then, is coming to be recognized: pious euphemisms are losing their potency to disguise the reality of injustice."[16] She hopes that her readers will begin to realize that the Church is not always as fair as they may have believed.

Perspective by incongruity appears again when Daly discusses Mary, the mother of Jesus, who stands as the eternal feminine symbol of Catholicism. Daly attempts to destroy the image of Mary as the ideal in womanhood by viewing her as less than human:

> The "eternal feminine" symbol, which continues to recur in religious writings, stands in stark opposition to the qualities of a developing, authentic person who will be unique, self-critical, self-creating, active, and searching. In contrast to these authentic personal characteristics, the Eternal Woman is said to have a vocation for surrender and secrecy; hence the symbol of the veil. Self-less, she achieves not individual realization but merely generic fulfillment in motherhood, physical or spiritual. She is said to be timeless and conservative by nature. She is shrouded in "mystery," because she is not recognized as a genuine human person.[17]

Daly's terms become stronger when she applies the notion of lack of humanness to all women in the Catholic Church, actually declaring that they are subhuman: "More important perhaps, the majority of women have never protested their relegation, in theory and in social fact, to subhuman categories."[18]

Daly combines two images of perspective by incongruity when, in discussing a belief in divine approval for the man-woman relationships perpetuated by the Church, she states: "Catholics have been very susceptible to this kind of mystification, particularly because of indoctrination in an underdeveloped theology, and because of static and traditionalist notions of faith and revelation."[19] Here she has introduced the notion of indoctrination, which carries connotations of brainwashing and a lack of free choice. This she equates with the Church's teaching of its doctrine, which it undoubtedly prefers to call instruction. By focusing on the process as indoctrination, Daly hopes to point out the absurdity of espousing a traditional belief without questioning it. The perspective by incongruity in the phrase, "underdeveloped theology," combines Catholic theology with the notion that it is unsophisticated, naive, and primitive. The theology of the Catholic Church, because of its long history of development and stability over time, usually is not considered to be underdeveloped. Daly employs this word to modify the word "theology," however, to state what she considers to be an accurate assessment--that the theology of the Church in regard to women is indeed underdeveloped.

Later in the article, Daly uses perspective by incongruity as a strategy to reverse the argument of the Church that feminism is harmful to both women and the Church. Daly's technique is to argue that the Church, by not adopting feminist principles, is harming itself. She does this by juxtaposing the Church and words such as "wounded," "deprived," and "grievously hurt," implying that rather than working to sustain and generate faith--its generally perceived function--the Church is destroying itself: "By sexual discrimination the Church has been wounded in its structures, for its has deprived itself of the gifts and insights of more than half its members. It has been grievously hurt in its members of both sexes, for in a society which welcomes and fosters prejudice, not only is the human potential of the subject group restricted but the superordinate group also becomes warped in the process."[20]

Daly concludes, as does Atkinson, with a final example of perspective by incongruity. Again, like Atkinson, she labels the Church evil rather than good: "There is a demonic aspect to the Church's structures, but there are also signs of hope that its negative, life-destroying elements can be transformed."[21] The posting of the devil or a demon within the Church is a strong restructuring of the usual perception of the Church as representing God and good and working against the forces of evil. And, while the Church represents positive, life-creating forces, she creates a new view of the situation by labeling it as negative and life-destroying. For Daly, then, perspective by incongruity is an important technique with which to point out aspects of the Church that are unjust and that should be corrected.

III

An examination of the uses of perspective by incongruity in two pieces of rhetoric by feminists attempting to deal with and argue against the Catholic Church's treatment of women illustrates that this technique is common in rhetorical situations where a communicator attempts to supplant a traditional view of a situation with a new and restructured one. One way to deal with the problem is to juxtapose a new or opposite perception with a favored, traditional one, making the old view appear less desirable to the audience.

Although demonstrated here in discourse by contemporary feminists, the technique of perspective by incongruity is not unique to their discourse. The technique has been used by feminists and others throughout history to argue against religious teachings and institutions. Commentaries in Elizabeth Cady Stanton's The Woman's Bible, for example, include the use of perspective by incongruity. In one instance, Stanton uses the technique to portray the serpent in the Garden of Eden as a Socratic or Platonic figure in order to dispel blame for the fall of Adam and Eve from the woman: "Like Socrates or Plato, his powers of conversation and asking puzzling questions, were no doubt marvellous, and he roused in the woman that intense thirst for knowledge, that the simple pleasures of picking flowers and talking with Adam did not satisfy."[22] Few people could resist being enraptured by the thought and discourse of either Socrates or Plato; because the snake possessed similar qualities, Eve cannot be blamed for having been swayed by its arguments.

Other feminists have argued similarly. Women's suffrage leader Matilda Joslyn Gage juxtaposes the Church and the crime of robbery in her work, Woman, Church and State: "The most stupendous system of organized robbery known has been that of the church towards women, a robbery that has not only taken her self-respect but all rights of person; the fruits of her own industry; her opportunities of education; the exercise of her own judgment, her own conscience, her own will."[23] Like Atkinson, Gage destroys the usual view of the Church as a charitable institution; it becomes instead a criminal seeking to steal rather than to give.

Prostitution is connected with the Church in anarchist Emma Goldman's essay on the traffic in women. Again, the Church is charged with fostering a criminal activity: ". . .since it is known to every intelligent student that prostitution is of religious origin, maintained and fostered for many centuries, not as a shame, but as a virtue, hailed as such by the Gods themselves."[24] Prostitution, which is viewed by most churches as an immoral activity, becomes in this case sanctioned by the Church. The equation of these two images is intended to lead readers to a rethinking of the Church's ideology and practices.

Arguments against the Church in general throughout history also have included the use of perspective by incongruity. Voltaire, for example, questions the authenticity of Jesus as the special child of God by equating Jesus' fame with an image campaign, rather than assuming, as many religious teachings do, that his fame was due to divine status: "In a word, there is no kind of trickery, fraud, and imposture that the Nazaraeans do not adopt. At the end of three years they succeeded in having Jesus recognised as a god."[25]

The value of the Bible is attacked by Joseph Lewis, an atheist who served as president of the Freethinkers of America and who initiated various legal proceedings against the incorporation of religion in public schools. He equates the Bible with obscenity: "It is a collection of obscene stories gathered together solely for the purpose of expressing the lasciviousness of human nature, and that is why they are put in the Bible. It reflects the sexual depravity of its authors."[26] Here, Lewis' use of perspective by incongruity causes a questioning of the traditional view that the Bible is the word of God; it becomes instead the writing of pornographers.

Similar arguments are presented by Madalyn Murray O'Hair, who initiated the suit resulting in the U.S. Supreme Court's decision to ban Bible reading and prayer recitation from public schools. She refers to the ideology and tenets of religion as

"old garbage of rules"[27] and "fairy tales,"[28] a juxtaposition of the notions of divine doctrine with trash and fantasy. She offers an attack on the Bible similar to that of Lewis, associating the Bible with negative qualities and evil lessons: "It is poor literature, poor history and poor ethics and all in all it has nothing to recommend it."[29] She continues by pointing out that "going clear through the Old Testament one finds nothing but hatred, vengeance, cruelty, oppression, lust, deprivation. It is a perfectly horrible book."[30]

Perhaps the frequency of the use of perspective by incongruity to argue against accepted perceptions best can be understood by an examination of the way in which rhetoric functions to create reality. Many theorists[31] have argued that the beliefs and values--or the view of reality--held by an individual is formed to a large degree by symbols such as language. Cassirer, for example, suggests that language creates its own reality because it organizes the sensory world of perceptions. He explains this process: "From this point of view, myth, art, language, and science appear as symbols; not in the sense of mere figures which refer to some given reality by means of suggestion and allegorical renderings, but in the sense of forces each of which produces and posits a world of its own. . . . Thus the special symbolic forms are not imitations, but organs of reality, since it is solely by their agency that anything real becomes an object for intellectual apprehension, and as such is made visible to us."[32]

The notion that rhetoric creates reality is evidenced in the formation of the attitudes, beliefs, values, and in fact, the entire world or reality of religious believers. The ceremonies and rituals and the tenets repeated and reinforced are rhetorical forms that operate to create a particular reality for the participants. Whether this reality conforms to the actual world is irrelevant; what is important is that religious rhetoric has created a special reality that is true and real for the participants.

Perspective by incongruity attempts to shatter the world created by tradicional rhetoric that fosters long-accepted religious teachings. The rhetor arguing against tradition who employs this technique begins inside the traditional world or reality with an image that conforms to that reality. But then a jarring, opposing image is introduced that forces the auditor or reader to re-think and question--at least momentarily--the components of his or her world. The more radical the juxtaposition of images, the more threatening to the reality the rhetoric will be; at the same time, the greater potential for failure the technique will have. For if a juxtaposition is too radical, audience members will feel so threatened that they simply will retreat into their own special reality and refuse to consider the arguments of the rhetor. Communicators who use perspective by incongruity, then, must employ it cautiously. They must introduce a notion that is jarring enough to initiate the process of re-thinking, but at the same time, they must not present an image that is so strong that it immediately alienates the audience.

Thus, while both Atkinson and Daly may cause their audiences to reconsider their views toward Catholicism and its treatment of women through perspective by incongruity, Daly's rhetoric probably would be more effective with a Catholic audience because her images are less strong, less radical, and easier to accept. Atkinson's use of perspective by incongruity would be cheered by an audience already hostile to the Catholic Church and favorable to feminism, but it probably would anger and alienate many members of a Catholic audience simply because the juxtaposition of conflicting categories is too extreme. Nevertheless, perspective by incongruity appears to be a useful technique for communicators seeking to sup-

plant an old reality with a new one, providing it is used to increase the awareness of the audience members and is supplemented by other rhetorical strategies such as evidence to substantiate the claims being made in the juxtaposition of mutally-exclusive notions.

Notes

[1]Kenneth Burke, "Literature as Equipment for Living," in Critical Theory Since Plato, ed. Hazard Adams (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1971), p. 946.

[2]Kenneth Burke, Permanence & Change (Los Altos, Calif.: Hermes, 1954), p. 89.

[3]Ti-Grace Atkinson, Amazon Odyssey (New York: Links Books, 1974), pp. 191-97.

[4]Mary Daly, "Women and the Catholic Church," in Sisterhood is Powerful, ed. Robin Morgan (New York: Vintage, 1970), pp. 124-38.

[5]Carol Kleinman, "Women's Movement Just Sputtering Along?" Chicago Tribune, 20 November 1974, sec. 3, p. 2.

[6]Judith Martin, "An Attack on Ti-Grace," Washington Post, 11 March 1971, sec. B, pp. 1-2.

[7]Atkinson, p. 191.

[8]Ibid., p. 192.

[9]Ibid., p. 194.

[10]Ibid.

[11]Ibid.

[12]Ibid., pp. 194-95.

[13]Ibid., p. 196.

[14]Ibid., pp. 196-97.

[15]Ibid., p. 197.

[16]Daly, p. 126.

[17]Ibid., p. 127.

[18]Ibid., p. 128.

[19]Ibid., p. 129.

[20]Ibid., p. 130.

[21]Ibid., p. 138.

[22]Elizabeth Cady Stanton, The Woman's Bible: Parts I and II (1895; rpt. New York: Arno Press, 1972), p. 25.

[23]Matilda Joslyn Gage, Women, Church and State (New York: Truth Seeker, 1893), p. 527.

[24]Emma Goldman, The Traffic in Women and Other Essays on Feminism (1917; rpt. New York: Times Change Press, 1970), p. 22.

[25]Voltaire, Toleration and Other Essays, trans. Joseph McCabe (New York: Knickerbocker Press, 1912), p. 178.

[26]Joseph Lewis, "Mike Wallace Interviews Joseph Lewis on TV," An Atheist Manifesto (New York: Freethought Press, 1954), n.p.

[27]Madalyn Murray O'Hair, Why I Am an Atheist (Austin, Texas: Society of Separationists, 1976), p. 2.

[28]Ibid., p. 3.

[29]Ibid., pp. 10-11.

[30]Ibid., p. 11.

[31]See, for example, Ernest G. Bormann, "Fantasy and Rhetorical Vision: The Rhetorical Criticism of Social Reality," Quarterly Journal of Speech, 58 (December 1972), 396-407 and Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1966).

[32]Ernst Cassirer, Language and Myth, trans. Susanne K. Langer (New York: Harper, 1946), p. 8.

Sheila J. Gibbons

COVERING WOMEN: WOMEN'S PUBLICATIONS AND THE MASS MEDIA

Journalists and social scientists are still writing epitaphs for the Sixties, the decade in which the nation discovered many different voices in the chorus calling for recognition. Among the most strident of the voices were those of the sopranos and altos, the women who started what came to be known as "women's lib." Beginning about 1968, the female chorus let it be known that in addition to harmonizing with the tenors and basses, they'd like to select the music and direct the singing. The women's movement had been born -- again.

In 1963 a free-lance writer who contributed frequently to women's magazines. Betty Friedan, wrote The Feminine Mystique, a book which stirred up a great deal of controversy about what fulfills American women. The happy homemaker/loving wife/imaginative mother triad of roles was not what it was cracked up to be, Friedan said, and the sooner men and women recognized that, the better off everyone would be. The mass media, particularly women's magazines, were partially to blame for reinforcing stereotypes about women's roles, she said.

Three years later, Friedan and 31 other women founded the National Organization for Women. Many other women's groups had been formed around the nation, many of which coalesced with NOW. Other more radical groups and collectives formed to support the interests of lesbians or women in a particular region or occupation. And in March 1968, the first women's liberation newsletter, Voice of women's liberation, was published. Voice went from three mimeographed pages to four pages offset by its second issue, and served as the main vehicle of communication for the fledgling "women's movement."[1] "Women's lib: was not in the journalism business -- and that is where the interface with this research project begins.

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between advocates of women's rights who edit periodicals for women and the mass media for whom the women's movement was a news event. What did they think of the mass media's performance in treating stories of interest to women? Why were women's liberation groups hostile to the establishment media? Why did feminists set up alternative publications and turn to alternative programming in established broadcast media? Do female reporters from radio, television and print media seem to give fairer coverage than males do? Do these reporters contact editors of alternative women's publications for assistance in developing stories? How do these editors view their publications in relation to the mass media?

A "socially responsible" press, the kind we like to think we enjoy in this country, is expected to uncover news made not only by the powerful, but to find and publish the stories about the powerless, or those struggling for a share of influence. If there is dissatisfaction with the press's performance in relaying news about a dissident group or a new point of view, a flurry of letters to the editor may result. In broadcasting, an unhappy viewer or group can invoke the

Fairness Doctrine in hopes that the licensee will amplify the viewer's standpoint. Or the person or group who feels their condition is being ignored by mass media can --if they can afford it -- begin a new publication.

It should be pointed out early in this paper that although a number of "alternative" publications were begun out of a dissatisfaction with the performance of the mass media, not all were. Specialized publications are more appropriate for sharing information about research, organizational activities, the arts, etc. Their editors know that, realistically, the mass media cannot often make room for items that appeal only to a small share of their readership or market.

The viewpoints of editors who steer "alternative" publications can contribute to the body of knowledge about mass media processes and to the study of specialized periodicals -- more and more of which are gaining reader and influence. These editors' opinions about the sensitivity of mass media to women's issues can suggest areas of strength and weakness in the media's handling of news about women.

WOMEN'S NEWS

"Newsworthiness" is judged on an amorphous standard that varies with the size and type of community. Not everyone agrees on what makes a woman newsworthy. Women themselves are divided on the subject, and so are newspaper, magazine, and television editors.

There's another side of the question too. What's "news" to women? Recipes? Fashions? Politics? Equal pay for equal work?

Gena Corea, a former women's page editor, criticized the coverage newspapers give to women. She cited a 1973 study which showed that editors consider women to be newsmakers if they meet one of these criteria: an important husband, beauty, victimization, political significance, performance in the arts or athletics, ability as a homemaker, and "first woman" status, i.e., first female Little League shortstop. And not many women meet even these criteria, Corea said.[2]

Yet, even if a woman is a bona fide newsmaker in her own right, many reporters and editors insist on locking her into the domestic attributes of her life. How many times, Corea asked, have you read of a local candidate for public office, described as a "petite housewife" and a "mother of three," who was asked how her husband felt about her seeking election?[3]

Susan H. Miller found that news photos are still shot and cropped to conform to traditional ideas about women's and men's roles. In a study of the Washington Post and the Los Angeles Times, half of the women in photos were shown as spouses, socialites or entertainers, but less than a fourth of the shots depicted men in these roles. About 75 percent of the men's photos showed them as politicians, professionals, or sports figures -- less than 25 percent showed women in these roles. Photos of brides accounted for almost one-quarter of the total photos of women in the Post.[4]

Neither paper carried "cheesecake" photos, Miller said (although Corea observed that United Press International has a photographer wandering around Australia taking pictures of women "as nearly nude as possible!").[5] However, Miller found that the Times did have a penchant for running photos of beauty queens, 12 in 46 issues of

the paper, for an average of more than one in every four days.[6]

In 1972 female employees at the Washington Post complained to the paper's management that "Many stories considered expendable deal with the social issues of interest to the general reader but they are given short shrift in this male-oriented, politically-attuned newspaper. The issues of women's rights, health, consumer news, day care, abortion and welfare are examples of stories not being adequately covered or displayed; and a newspaper with so few women cannot adequately reflect the interests and concerns of our complex and fragmented society."[7]

WOMEN'S PAGES

Typically crowded with articles on fashion, food and family, women's pages became easy targets for feminist criticism. Some women's sections have since been revamped as "lifestyle" sections, focusing on both men and women, entertainment, and leisure. But if readers and reporters thought this redesigning would free more of the newswhole for profiles and investigative pieces about people in the community, women as well as men, they were disappointed. Zena Beth Guenin McGlashen found that entertainment material had replaced traditional content,[8] and Susan Miller discovered that "lifestyle" sections still tend to look like women's pages because they retain the traditional slick ornamentation of women's photos and fashion and cosmetic ads.[9]

Writer Lindsy Van Gelder said that the lifestyle section for which she worked was "a dumping ground for anything the male editors consider a 'women's story'. So we get all the serious news stories about ERA, rape-law changes, back-pay lawsuits, and so forth, back among the girdle ads instead of on page one or two or three where they belong."[10]

And at the same time, the meaty "blockbuster" stories developed by women's page reporters often are "stolen" for play in other sections of the paper, depriving the women's pages of an attention-getter.

COVERING THE WOMEN'S MOVEMENT

"If I believed what I read about the women's movement in the press, I'd have nothing to do with it. If I believed what I read about myself in the press, I'd have little to do with me."

That's what Gloria Steinem, editor and writer for Ms. magazine and a founder of the National Women's Political Caucus, told the 1973 convention of the American Newspaper Publishers Association. Steinem said women don't want sympathy in their battle for equal rights, but they do expect to be taken seriously and reported accurately.[11]

In his article, "What Men Think About the Movement," Robert T. Tuten said that "It became very clear in the late '60's that if risque' women made good copy, angry women made even better copy."[12] In adopting some of the tactics of war resisters in the 1960's -- guerrilla theater, demonstrations, picketing -- women's liberationists attracted a good bit of curiosity and ridicule. At the 1968 "Miss America Contest," some feminist protesters wanted to burn a bra, draft-card style. They never did, but the media picked up on their plans, and women's liberationists

have been dubbed "bra-burners" ever since. It can be argued that titillation was the very thing that caused the protest in the first place, and the news media only reflected that. Still, Steinem said, every time she tries to explain that feminists aren't underwear-burners, her explanation gets more play in the media than other points she tries to make.[13] Explaining away the movement's bad reputation takes time from discussion of other issues, she felt.

Women's rights advocates have complained that the media -- underground periodicals as well as the establishment press -- have oversimplified their goals, locked them into stereotypes as hysterical women or sex-starved harpies, or worse, sexual deviants (working an endorsement of support for lesbian rights into the NOW convention platform several years ago split the membership, many of whom were fearful of how the media would explain the move to their audiences). They have accused the media of dwelling on the way feminists have expressed their anger and frustration, rather than probing to find out what caused it in the first place. They are unhappy with the way the media covered abortion debate (women's rightists vs. right-to-life groups) and the Equal Rights Amendment (NOW vs. anti-ERA groups).

Tuten criticized the failure of television to recognize the way NOT to present information about the women's movement:

> If the war, some 12,000 miles away was too hot to handle, the women's movement right here at home was a whole magnitude worse. The television news media method for handling the problem has been to only publicize marches, demonstrations, and political speeches. Only on an occasional talk show has the basic claim of women's liberation come up for airing... Generally the interlocuters have attempted to see and portray the movement as another minority group seeking its day in the sun. With the quasi-liberal paternalism characteristic of network broadcasting, the movement is given its due.[14]

Miller found that coverage of the women's movement was limited in news photos, too:

> In the 46 days sampled, the Washington Post carried more than twice as many photos of male activists as female activists. The Los Angeles Times published equal numbers of photos of male and female activists. However, less than 15 percent of all photos of women activists showed advocates of women's rights.... Coverage of women's sports activism, or professional activities is negligible, and falls far behind coverage of similar activities for men... The portrayal of women's roles in the Post and the Times does not reflect the roles women occupy in the District of Columbia or Los Angeles communities, nor does it reflect the impact of changes in women's roles on economics and social factors.[15]

In many ways, the movement itself has confounded coverage of women's issues by its hostility towards members of the establishment press, print and broadcast alike. The movement's desire NOT to be misrepresented, quoted out of context, or condensed to fit a newswhole or second-limit, as well as a wide-spread fear that

media use them for their own purposes rather than to inform others about the movement, has created a paranoia about contact with the media, which in turn, caused movement women to censor information they share with reporters and correspondents. Even reporters who are known to be sympathetic to the women's liberation movement -- men and women alike -- have an uneven track record when it comes to getting members of the movement to talk to them.

KNOW, inc., a feminist press in Pittsburgh, Pa., distributed a list of "Reporters You Can Trust." Forty-three journalists appear on it, including four men. According to the preface, "every writer on this list has written and gotten published a news story or feature article that showed no evidence of sexism." The tendency to sensationalize and hence distort the news of the movement isn't universal, the preface said.[16]

What is interesting about the list is not the names of the individuals who appear on it, but the pointed reference to those who don't:

> The pseudo-story of the 'burned bras' and other tasteless, if not downright deliberate, mis-representations of women's liberation movement, have made feminists very wary of the members of the fourth estate. Some refuse to be interviewed at all, others will not talk to male reporters, experience having taught that men's biases against sexual equality are stronger and show more. Women reporters, even those who express initial reservations, have repeatedly wound up by joining us.[17]

In 1970, East Coast leaders of the women's liberation movement decided to get tougher with the press. Sandie North, in "Reporting the Movement," said that movement women, "restive after what they feel has been a press blackout on their activities until, roughly, the fall of 1969, feel no compunction about stomping on the mass media and the men who control it."[18]

Said North:

> They're fed up with ridicule from male reporters and editors who sneer at the feminists at public gatherings. They've said that letting any representative of the male establishment -- man or woman -- in to report on their meetings is as smart as it would be for black power men to invite Lester Maddox to their caucus'.[19]

A woman reporter for Time told North she was cut off by a woman's liberation group after she attended one meeting. A Newsweek editor contacted dozens of feminists in October 1969 before she could find one who was willing to talk for print. Television networks all want film documentaries for news shows, but have met with dug-in resistance from militant feminists. Younger and more radical women refused to be filmed, even if the reporter and producer were females sympathetic to the subject they wanted to film.

THE REPORTER AS ADVOCATE

"The liberation story is trouble for a woman reporter from start to finish," said Marlene Sanders, vice president for television documentaries, ABC. She tried to film the Feminist Repertory Theater show at the Congress to United Women in New York in late 1969. She met with feminists who refused to be filmed, insisted that film not be used after it was shot, and who took ABC's trunk of lights and film canisters to foil Sanders' project. "Here I am, in real agreement with the Women's Liberation Front, and they're oppressing me."[20]

Nora Ephron described the strain placed on women journalists who cover women's rights activities and who are in sympathy with the movement. "I am a writer and I am a feminist," she wrote in her book, Crazy Salad, "and the two seem to be constantly in conflict." She described her own feelings of sympathy with the National Women's Political Caucus at the 1972 Democratic National Convention in Miami, and recalled that "There were women reporters so passionate y involved in the (abortion) issue that they were lobbying the delegates."[21]

American journalism has been touched by advocacy many times, but as North says, men and women reporters and writers "are steeped in a tradition of fairness."[22] The hiring of ombudsmen -- internal auditors of bias -- on papers and in the news organizations ostensibly builds in a method for scrutinizing the fairness of the news. But the '60's shook the code of objectivity under which journalists tried to perform:

> In the 1960's the gatekeeper model of journalistic professionalism was questioned by some leading journalists... Some proclaimed that objectivity in reporting was impossible, or at least doubtful, and that the task of the journalist was to represent the viewpoints and interest of competing groups, especially those of excluded and underprivileged groups... Therefore the role of the journalist is to insure that all perspectives are adequately represented in the media, for the resolution of social conflict depends on effective representation of alternative definitions of reality. The journalist must "participate" in the advocacy process.[23]

John Johnstone found that 34.9 percent of the 1,300 journalists he polled in 1971 thought there were too few crusaders in the media. But only 11 percent were willing to endorse the activities of the underground press without qualification.[24]

The advocacy role is an uncomfortable one for most journalists. "The journalist in the main works for organizations with heterogeneous audiences," Janowitz says. "These audiences respond with sharp criticism to content which distorts that part of the environment with which they are directly familiar; and persistent distortion runs the risk of loss of specific audience segments."[25]

FEMINIST PERIODICALS

The feminist pressed, on the other hand, wear the mantle of advocacy easily. Rather than shunning it, advocacy of women's "liberation" and women's rights was the raison d'etre of the several hundred publications edited for women.

Many of the periodicals published for women do not assume a radical feminist committment on the part of their readers. They seek to communicate with women in terms of law, health, employment, or regional interests. Many are not the least bit militant. They simply are specialized publications geared to a small audience that shares a common interest, be it cultural, occupational, or informational.

The feminist press has not been written about very widely. It is a variegated brand of journalism, covering many different topics from many different perspectives. Many of the publications cannot be said to be "objective" in nature -- they are most often described as "literature of the movement" rather than "journalism":

> Our press falls squarely (circularly?) into the realm of advocacy journalism. One of the chief characteristics of feminist journalism is that we do have an ax to grind. Feminist journalism does attempt to deflect the ax of oppression that has for thousands of years ground out the existence of women in world history. Men, and especially women, who deny that our press is biased, who strive for the mythical objectivity of the New York Times, deny feminist journalism's very reason for existence.[26]

Alexa Freeman and Valle Jones urge feminists to look beyond "male-created mass media" and create their own forms of and designs of feminist communication. They also suggest that feminists discard the notion that the media are objective:

> Even the most honest attempt to present factual information cannot encompass the full variety of possible perspectives. At best, it can only attempt to achieve representation of a broad range of views. (Moreover, we should ask whether objectivity is necessarily a goal to which feminist communication should aspire).[27]

Some writers feel that feminist communication burgeoned in reaction to unfair, even malicious, treatment by the establishment press, and that advocacy journalism practiced by feminist writers and editors is a logical reaction to the treatment of the women's movement by the mass media:

> The recognition that communication is essential to building and strengthening a movement, the realization that the mass media is not only inaccessible to feminists but actually uses its power to distort and discredit the image of feminism, and the belief that feminists needed their own means of communicating led to the birth of the feminist publications that have been vital elements in the politicization of thousands of women.[28]

Donna Allen, director of the Women's Institute for Freedom of the Press, Washington, D.C., feels that feminist editors (and editors in all media) can best tell their story by adhering to the three principles she follows in publishing Media Report to Women: no attacks on people, letting people speak for themselves, and emphasis on fact over opinion.[29]

Jo Freeman, author of The Politics of Women's Liberation and founder of the first women's newsletter, Voice of women's liberation, notes that the multitude of feminist publications grew partly out of fear, because of many women's inexperience with the press. Women also felt they needed their own press because the establishment media had inaccurately reported social movements and student protests of which '60's feminists had been a part.

"Most of the media compounded this problem." Freeman said, "by treating early women's liberation activities with a mixture of humor, ridicule, and disbelief."[30]

Anne Mather suggests that "The decision of women's magazines -- as well as other publications of the 1960's -- to ignore the growing 20th century 'woman question' (in spite of the fact that many were having problems reaching the lucrative, younger woman market) -- was clear enticement for others to launch an alternate, feminist press."[31]

Both Freeman and Mather note that the underground papers of the '60's, rather than offering support to feminists, ran chauvinistic material side-by-side with feminist articles. "Underground and New Left papers were often the worst of the lot," Freeman said, "frequently running women's liberation stories illustrated by naked women and exaggerated genitalis."[32]

But the problem of getting the mass media agenda to cover feminist activity still remained. Nancy Cooper has pointed out that "Feminist periodicals, like an assortment of other specialized media, can supplement and enrich, but certainly not replace, the general mass media... Feminist periodicals are a way of filling the information gap because, at least for the present, feminists are a minority group."[33]

POLLING EDITORS OF PUBLICATIONS FOR WOMEN

To find out how editors of these periodicals felt about communication for women, a questionnaire was mailed to 210 editors of women's publications. The mailing list was developed from the "periodicals" section of "Women's Media Groups" in the 1976 Index to Media Report to Women,[34] and from the list of "Movement Periodicals" in Womenhood: Media.[35] The questionnaires were mailed with a cover letter and a postage-paid return envelope.

Expectations about the return rate were optimistic but tempered by the hunch that many of the publications might have folded and that their editors simply might not respond. A number of the publications on both lists were associated with university groups or women's centers, organizations which frequently run into staffing and funding problems that force them to close up shop. Mail might still be delivered to such a group, even if it no longer is active, but it's not likely that the questionnaire would be returned.

In writing the questionnaire, care was taken to avoid the "tell-me-everything-you-know-about" design that Robert L. Hoskins cautions against.[36] Questions asked for specific information about the publication and limited the range of responses on opinion questions. Only one open-ended question was asked. Neither the cover letter nor the questionnaire asked for supplementary information or a copy of the publication.

The mail survey generated about 93 responses out of the mailinglist of 210. Twelve were returned, undeliverable; four were returned with notes -- sometimes lengthy -- from editors who explained the publication was defunct; one sent literature about the publication but did not fill out the questionnaire. Altogether, 76 questionnaires were tabulated.

RESULTS

As might be expected, none of the respondents is engaged in daily, or even weekly, journalism or publishing. The greatest number published monthly (30.3%) or quarterly (31.6%).

Most edit newsletters (34.2%). Magazines represent 25% of the respondents, journals 19.7%, followed by newspapers with 15.8%. Direct similarity with mass media products is thus quite limited in the feminist press, even if the magazine and newspaper figures are considered together. Television, the medium named most often as most persons' news source, has no feminist counterpart. In short, the scale of the feminist press is simply different.

None of the editors works for "old" publications. Barely one-sixth of the publications were founded before the women's movement gained media attention around 1968. The remainder have been founded since then, with more than half (56.7%) founded since 1972.

Better than a third (35.5%) of the editors claim readership greater than 5,000 for their publications. Twenty-nine percent of the publications fall into the modest 1,000 to 3,000 range.

Some of the high-circulation periodicals are married to their membership, which boosts subscription rates, such as National Business Women (170,000); or the AAUW Journal (190,000), although more and more the Journal has addressed itself to women's issues on a general basis rather than simply functioning as a house organ. Others simply are growing, such as Progressive Woman with 24,273 monthly readers; Playgirl with more than a million; and Chatelaine in Canada, which reports 1.28 million paid subscribers.

Pinning down the "editorial profile" of the respondents was hard. There are inherent problems in grouping publications under any rubric, and trying to squeeze 210 periodicals into the category of "special interest periodicals for women" was no exception. Respondents often filled in more than one response for the question that asked about editorial emphasis. But their determination to be accurate actually made the question more sensitive rather than less. The multiple responses and the inflated "other" category revealed a wealth of information.

The computer was programmed to tabulate multiple responses to this question, so percentages add up to more than 100%. Scholarly material was carried by only 17.1%. Less than 14% were literary publications. More than 35% were news-oriented (i.e., they covered breaking news about women), and 36% carried organizational information (news-oriented and organizational information constituted the most frequent combinations of multiple response answers). Forty-four percent described themselves as "other" -- usually after describing themselves as another one of the above. The "other" entries included political analysis, essays on arts, culture; consciousness-raising and coping; alternative lifestyles; nuts-and-bolts informa-

tion about careers; sexual preference; history; and communications.

Eighty-six percent of the periodicals had all-female staffs. Almost 11% had both male and female (though more female) staffers, but only one publication reported having a "near-even" balance of men and women on the staff.

After collecting the "demographics" of each periodical, the questionnaire turned to the relationship between the mass media and the respondents. Almost 40% said they felt the media had a very positive image of their periodicals. They said they thought journalists considered it "a valuable communication tool in its own rights." Another 28% said they thought journalists perceived their periodicals as informative but probably biased. Slightly more than five percent responded "yes" when asked if the media probably thought their periodical was "a catch-all for women's lib rhetoric." Twenty-eight percent of the respondents declined to answer the question, said it wasn't applicable, or added other perceptions such as "Journalists consider us a curiosity," or "They're hardly aware of us," or "No opinion."

Only 5.3% of the respondents edit strictly local publications. Eight percent say their publications have a regional circulation. Forty-two percent say their readership is national, while an equal percentage say their readership is international.

Of those who answered the question (21 editors did not), about 70 percent who say they edit for "a radical reminist" reader, or "a reader with a well-defined interest in feminism but without a radical commitment" indicate that the media perceive their periodicals positively ("valuable tool") or with mild if not overwhelming favor ("informative though probably biased"). Almost half the editors said they were writing for readers who perceived themselves as non-radical feminists. Only one of the 10% of the respondents who edit "radical feminist" publications believes the mass media write her publication off simply as "a catch-all for 'women's lib' rhetoric."

More than half the editors said journalists have called them for help on stories they were working on. Two thirds of the editors who say the media look upon their publications favorably report that reporters call on them "often" or at least "sometimes" for help.

Almost half said journalists had used their publications for story ideas. Journalists seemed to depend more on those periodicals described by their editors as "news-oriented" for story ideas than any other type. Sixty-three percent of editors of news-type periodicals said reporters have used their publication for story ideas. Reporters used other types of publication (scholarly, literary, organizational) to develop their ideas too, the editors indicated, but not nearly as often as the news-oriented ones.

All but four editors who responded thought the mass media were writing more frequently about women's issues, with 30% noticing "a great deal more" coverage since 1970. All the editors who perceived that the media thought favorably of their publications indicated that journalists were writing about women's issues "a great deal more frequently."

Respondents who thought the media were writing more frequently about women's issues also thought the media were writing more sensitively than at the beginning of the decade. Only 5.2% said the mass media were dealing with women's issues less sensitively than in 1970. One respondent said that journalists were writing more often and more sensitively in places like Washington and New York City, but that sensitivity to the issues had only improved somewhat in the rest of the country, and frequency of articles on women's issues hadn't improved much at all. One editor detected a great deal more sensitivity in articles "when they write -- the total amount isn't all that much increased," she said. And another said journalists are writing about women's issues "somewhat more, but with less sensitivity."

The question that drew the most "extra" responses (followup comments scrawled in the margins of the questionnaire) asked editors if they thought the sex of journalists makes a difference in the way they cover women's issues. Three-quarters of those who answered this question said they felt female reporters were more sympathetic and helpful in covering and transmitting news about women's issues. The remainder said there was no significant difference in the performance of a male reporter or a female reporter on this type of assignment. Ten editors declined to answer. None identified males as providing better coverage of women's issues.

One editor said females are "more objective, have a more realistic perception of events." One said women are "more sensitive," while another said she thought "males were facetious or hostile more often." One said she's noted no significant difference between men and women reporters, except for "feminist reporters, thankfully growing in number." One woman who thought females tended to be more helpful and sympathetic in reporting women's news also pointed out that "even women tend to be sexist." And another said females are better at reporting women's issues "but the bad ones are really hostile!"

One question asked editors to explain why they started their publications. The question was left open-ended in order to record each of the many reasons expected to be offered.

The reasons were varied. Some simply wanted to improve communication within a women's center or an organization of professional women. Some wanted to support a forum for purely feminist thought and analysis, including politics, music, art, and women's studies. Many wanted to use a publication to solidify a sense of "community" among women with specialized interests, i.e., federally employed women, lesbians, collegiate women, women trying to re-enter or enter the marketplace for the first time, women in communication, scholars, businesswomen, writers, laywomen in churches, women seeking information about law and health. Better than one-third of them referred specifically to filling some kind of information gap by supplying information not readily available through day-to-day channels. That the mass media leaves gaping holes and distortions in its coverage of women's issues is not merely implied by these respondents -- it is asserted.

CONCLUSIONS

The range of interests embodied by these periodicals ought to create a challenge for the mass media. These publications have developed at the same time as daily newspapers have been shutting down and as weeklies have grown. All-news

radio has grown. Much news and information is being funneled through smaller publications with more concentrated audiences, or through broadcast public affairs programs. Perhaps the major media ought to take a closer look at what is going into these specialized periodicals, and compare it with what is or isn't going into the local newspaper, magazine or television and radio programs. It would make their self-analysis more exhaustive. Broadcast licensees are required to ascertain the needs and their audiences. Using women's media as a basis of comparison could help.

Almost all the editors in this survey see improvement in the frequency and sensitivity of articles on what has come to be known as "the emergin woman." They do not carp about reporters they've dealt with, although the majority feel women journalists do a better job reporting women's issues. Many say their publications exist "to give the real picture of women," "to give women ideas about how to gain recognition for their efforts," "to give women an opportunity to give their points of view," "to communicate about progress in women's equality made in this area," "to fill a void in news coverage on affirmative action," etc. In short, the goals of these publications is to make women visible to other women and to show women how social forces affect them and how they can and do affect those forces themselves.

The survey shows that there is contact between these periodicals and the mass media. At one time the very creation of these periodicals was news. The media do consult with these editors, and reporters are writing about feminists and women's issues more. The survey does not disclose a rift or hostility between feminist editors and the general press. If there is dissatisfaction on the part of the editors surveyed, it seems to lie mainly in the frustrations of reaching women when limited by unsophisticated equipment, low budget, and small staff, at the same time that the mass media, with much wider influence and range, are inconsistent in assigning stories about women and giving them prominent play.

Journalists in the mass media are forced to divorce themselves from any special constituency among their readers and viewers. Their assessment of what constitutes news -- as opposed to what ought to be covered from a moral or philosophical standpoint -- is influenced by newsroom priorities, perceived expectation of reader, and demands of editors. The interplay of these factors dilutes coverage of "special events" or "special topics," categories into which news about women often falls. Unless a journalist's "beat" is women -- and few journalists have such a beat, at least not exclusively -- his or her tasks will be unlike those of a staffer on a "woman's" publication. As for mass media editors, they will advocate a certain type of coverage for a story they consider important, but most would deem it unwise actually to represent a "cause" in the newsroom. In that respect, they are totally unlike feminist editors, and likely to remain so.

FOOTNOTES

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The Ladder*
New Women's Times
Playgirl magazine
The Woman's Paper
Concern Magazine/Newsfold
Womanpower
Women's Studies Newsletter
Matrix (WICI)
Women Writing Newsletter
The Women's Newsletter
Lesbian Voices
Primavera
Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society
The Monthly Abstract
The Women's Patrol Sporadic
Northern Women Regional Journal
Long Time Coming
The Feminist Art Journal
Women's Rights Now Reporter
Comment
Feminary
Frontiers: a journal of women studies
Women in Struggle
Sister
Breakthrough
Houston Breakthrough
News and Views (AWRT)
The Other Women
Chatelaine magazine
Feminist Alliance Against Rape Newsletter
Feminine focus
Albatross
Media Report to Women
Few's News and Views
KNOW News
Women's Political Times
WEAL National Newsletter
Quest: A Feminist Quarterly
Woman Spirit
National Business Woman
Sibyl-Child, a woman's arts and culture journal
Gold Flower
Paid my Dues: Journal of Women and Music
The Price Mongoose
AAUW Journal
Women Today
On Campus with Women
Women's Work
Progressive Woman
Canadian Newsletter of Research on Women
Peace and Freedom
Clearinghouse International Newsletter
Concerns
Feminist Studies, Inc.
13th Moon
Black Belt Woman
Moving Out
New Directions for Women in Delaware
Earth's Daughters
Lesbian Connection
The Executive Woman
Press Woman
Women Artists New-letter
Women Speaking
Motorcycle Woman
The Woman Activist
Musica
University of Michigan Papers in Women's Studies
Lilith magazine

* defunct

32/

Branching Out
The Second Wave
New Directions for Women in New Jersey
Notes from the Third Year*
off our backs
Pandora, a Washington women's news journal

Defunct and Did not complete questionnaire

Women's Image
Mainely Now
The Furies: Lesbian Feminist Newspaper

Sent literature, did not complete questionnaire

Women's Herstory Research Center

* defunct

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